

AT A SPECIAL MEETING OF THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS OF MONTGOMERY COUNTY, VIRGINIA HELD ON THE 5<sup>TH</sup> DAY OF APRIL, 2007 AT 7:30 P.M. IN THE BOARD CHAMBERS, MONTGOMERY COUNTY GOVERNMENT CENTER, 755 ROANOKE STREET, CHRISTIANSBURG, VIRGINIA:

PRESENT:	Steve L. Spradlin	-Chairman
	Mary W. Biggs	-Vice Chair
	John A. Muffo	-Supervisors
	Annette S. Perkins	
	James D. Politis	
	Gary D. Creed	
	Doug Marrs	
	B. Clayton Goodman, III	-County Administrator
	L. Carol Edmonds	-Assistant County Administrator
	Marc Magruder	-Budget Manager
	Karen Edmonds	-Human Resources Director
	Michael Clark	-Parks and Recreation Director
	Judy W. Kiser	-Assistant to the County Administrator

### **CALL TO ORDER AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

The Chairman called the meeting to order and the Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

### **PUBLIC HEARINGS**

#### **Proposed 2007-2008 Budget**

#### **To receive citizens' comments with regard to the proposed FY 2007-2008 Budget**

The Chair opened the budget hearing with an invitation for citizens to comment on the proposed FY 2007-2008 budget, explaining that each speaker would be allowed five minutes to address the Board.

Jill Columbus , Area Office Director for New River Community Action (NRCA) for the Montgomery County and Radford area, addressed the Board on behalf of New River Community Action. She thanked the Board for their past support of New River Community Action. Ms. Columbus reported that the NRCA emergency services and nutrition program has served over 2,972 families from July 1, 2006 to this date, which includes only emergency services or nutrition (food bank). One of the biggest problems their clients are having right now

are the high electric bills . Generally the electric bills are past due in amounts of \$185-\$200. For someone on a fixed income or a very small income, and single parents, it is very difficult to pay these bills. The second crisis is lack of affordable housing in Montgomery County, with the cheapest or most inexpensive ranging from \$500-\$600. This is very poor housing, which is part of the reason that these individuals are seeing extremely high electric bills. They may have a 1-bedroom trailer and have an electric bill of \$300-\$500 due to the fact that they have huge holes in the windows that are taped over, or they have huge holes in the floors, or they have leaks, and they simply cannot afford anything better. The NRCA also has a free bread program which serves 50 to 60 individuals per day. These programs are very important to many people in Montgomery County.

Vicki Stewart, Program Director with Brain Injury Services of Southwest Virginia, spoke of the funds needed for this organization. Ms. Stewart said their New River Valley office is located on Faculty Drive in Blacksburg. She explained that the Brain Injury Services of Southwest Virginia provides case management services and life skills training to individuals with acquired brain injuries. At the present time they have sixteen clients who are living in Montgomery County. They are requesting that each local government cover 15% of the cost to provide services to their citizens, with the remaining 8% being funded by their ability to raise funds through the Golf Challenge and grant writing. According to estimated projections for 2008 fiscal year, 36 clients in Montgomery County will be served. Brain Injury Services of Southwest Virginia is requesting \$12,970 from Montgomery County for the upcoming fiscal year.

Susan Mauorga, who works out of the Blacksburg office of Brain Injury Services of Southwest Virginia, explained what the organization provides to their clients in the New River Valley. Case management basically is a link to provide resources and advocacy to brain injury survivors and their families, to help them rehabilitate, to return to work, or return to school. A case management also helps identify and create support systems for their clients and their clients' families. It can be seen as a central point to access resources and advocacy specific to individual needs. This service expedites healing and returning to being a part of, and participating in, our communities.

Fran Rooker, addressed the Board about the need for funds for Brain Injury Services of Southwest Virginia, which receives funding from nine other jurisdictions, as far away as Wise County. A member of the Pulaski County Board of Supervisors advised Ms. Rooker last year that funds from Pulaski County were being reduced to the organization specifically because Montgomery County was not funding its own families. And support from the City of Radford will potentially be eliminated due to lack of support from other jurisdictions. The drastic actions taken by other jurisdictions is asking Montgomery County to step up and fund their fair share. She requested that Montgomery County allocate appropriate funding for the families in Montgomery County. Ms. Rooker believes the Board's action will be an example to the neighboring jurisdictions.

Pat Sanders, a volunteer at New River Community Action, spoke of her experience with NRCA. The NRCA helped her as a single parent raising children on her own. She explained that she is on disability and is a recovering drug addict, and when she went to NRCA for help, they not only helped to feed her children, they paid her electric bill and helped her with housing. They also made her a responsible person and helped to change her life. She asked that the Board continue to fund this program.

Rhonda Wright introduced herself as owner (along with her husband) of the Riner Animal Hospital. She thanked the Board for approving the capital project funding for the schools. She voiced her support for the proposed 6¢ increase in the tax rate, and requested that more than 50% of the increase go toward funding the Montgomery County schools and salary increases for teachers and school staff to keep their pay levels competitive. She pointed out the importance of keeping the schools current with program initiatives as well as new technologies so our children can compete and excel in the world after they have graduated.

Katy Irene St. Marie of Valley Interfaith Child Care Center (VICC), explained that she started the VICC approximately two years ago for low income working families, to care for and educate infants and toddlers. There is research that shows quality, early child care and education can have an expediential difference in tax dollars paid out for such things as remediation and justice later in life. She said her purpose is to interrupt the cradle to prison pipeline that some of our families are destined for. If you get these children ready to go to kindergarten and they know how to sit in a group, use their words instead of their fists, follow simple directions, it is believed the kindergarten classes will be a lot more constructive for the other children who have been well prepared, and for the teachers who want to teach them. She further explained that VICC is in partnership with Head Start. The children will move right from VICC into the Head Start program and be ready for kindergarten. The Town of Blacksburg has contributed \$60,000 from their CDBG funding, and Blacksburg Presbyterian Church has contributed over \$100,000. She asked that the Board consider supporting this program.

John Gill, a retired resident of the Pilot community, suggested that the proposed budget is pretty high, especially with the recent reassessment which raised his real estate assessment by 30%. It will take more than the 3.2% increase he received in his retirement to pay for the increase. With the 6¢ increase in the real estate tax rate in FY 2006-07 and the proposed 6¢ increase for FY 2007-08, will be a 23% raise in two years. He does not understand how the people who are retired, or people who are working for a living can continue to pay their bills with the taxes being increased each year. Mr. Gill is not only concerned about the 6.8% pay increases that are proposed, he reminded the Board that county employees were provided a health stat clinic which he considers to be specialized health care. He asked that more details be included in the budget information on the county's web site.

Ann Hess, Civic representative on New River Community Action Board of Directors, thanked the Board of Supervisors for their support of the NRCA over the past years. She asked to clarify two items listed in the county's budget document. In the discussion about NRCA there was an argument for level funding, and Ms. Hess said she would like to clarify the contribution that Christiansburg makes to NRCA, and the disproportionate funding from the other local governments in the New River Valley. Christiansburg is correctly listed as contributing \$5,000

this year. These dollars are designated for one particular program, which is the Homeless Intervention Program (HIP). The Town elected to do this in response to a presentation made when it was considering the pros and cons of applying for a community development block grant.

Both Pulaski County and the City of Radford will increase their share of funding to NRCA next year. Floyd County has always proportionately funded the organization to a higher level than the proportion of clients, and is continuing to do so. Giles County has not yet responded to NVCA's request to pay their fair share.

Ms. Hess explained that all the jurisdictions have been asked to help with a new program, the Virginia Cares Program. This is a proven program that has dramatically reduced recidivism in the localities where it has been implemented. It is a voluntary program that assists persons who are leaving the jail after serving their terms and helps them to become contributing citizens. Each jurisdiction is requested to fund proportionately to help cover the overhead costs for the Virginia Cares Program which will begin on July 1, 2007. The program is completely funded from state and federal dollars for client services and for the direct service staff, but not for any administration costs. Montgomery County is requested to fund \$3,400 in additional funds to help cover the administrative costs of this program.

Richard Workman, a retired resident of the Blacksburg community, said he agreed with the gentleman from Pilot who had a problem with the 5.6% increase in the budget. He said it appears that the school operating fund and capital fund drives most of this budget. He pointed out that the county has a valuable piece of property in the old Blacksburg Middle School in Blacksburg. He quoted an article in the newspaper about the roof on the building needing to be repaired which will cost approximately \$241,000. He asked if the Board has made any attempt to sell the property.

The Chairman responded for the record that a joint committee has been established with representatives of Montgomery County and representatives of the Town of Blacksburg to work on the best possible way to sell or liquidate the old Blacksburg Middle School property. Information about the committee and committee meetings are on the county web site.

Charlie Bowles, a resident of the Riner community, did not oppose the proposed 63¢ tax rate, but he would like to see more of the money allocated for programs for the poor in Montgomery County. Mr. Bowles asserted there is a lot of money going to the schools, and everything else, such as big road projects, is going to Virginia Tech. The citizens in the Riner, Mt. Tabor, Elliston, and Shawsville areas are paying the same taxes that everyone else is paying, but they are not getting the same services. Mr. Bowles believes that organizations such as the Virginia Cares Program can help cut the crime rate in the county. He also suggested that the Board of Supervisors dispose of vacant buildings and property prior to moving forward with constructing a \$4 million football stadium in Blacksburg.

Julie Snyder, a resident of the Riner community, urged the Board to reconsider the county's budget and appropriate more operating funds for schools and to set the maximum tax rate allowed. Ms. Snyder said the average teacher pay is 4<sup>th</sup> lowest in the local band and the absolute

lowest in the state comparative band. The proposed budget will only allow for the basic step raise for teachers, averaging 1.5% per teacher, while they should be receiving a 5.7% increase to catch up with other county employees. Ms. Snyder believes this to be especially poor given the county's composite index is at the 53 percentile mark, and ranks 6<sup>th</sup> in the eleven districts in the local band and 5<sup>th</sup> out of eight districts in the state comparative band. She asked that the Board appropriate 3.5¢ of the 6¢ increase to schools and the balance to county projects. Ms. Snyder explained that a lot of parents were unable to attend this hearing because it is a school holiday, and asked that the Board consider this in the future when scheduling meetings that pertain to parents.

There being no further speakers, the public hearing on the proposed 2007-2008 budget was closed.

#### Advertised Real Estate Tax Rate-63¢ per \$100 of Assessed Value

#### **To receive citizens' comments with regard to the proposed tax rate**

The Chair opened the hearing on the advertised real estate tax rate with an invitation for citizens to comment on the proposed tax rate of 63¢ per \$100 of assessed value, explaining that each speaker would be allowed five minutes to address the Board.

Richard Workman, a retired resident of Blacksburg, addressed the Board about his reassessment which resulted in a 45% increase in his property tax. After meeting with the Board of Equalization, Mr. Workman said it was reduced to a 38% increase. He reiterated his earlier request that the Board of Supervisors take a long, hard look at how the tax rate will affect retired citizens and people on limited incomes.

Karen Trear, a resident of the Prices Fork area and a math teacher at Auburn High School, said that last year the Board wisely made the decision to provide funding for the much needed capital improvements for school system. She proposed that with the new assessments on real estate this year to support the Board's decision, it would be a perfect time to make a much needed investment in the personnel side of the county; for teachers, fire, rescue, police, and other county workers as well as services for seniors and those less fortunate. With a growing county like Montgomery, Ms. Trear believes the necessary assets are available to fund an adequate budget which will provide the needs for both the county side and also for the school side.

Brownie Cauley, a teacher at Blacksburg Middle School, addressed the Board about the school budget. Mr. Cauley described the 6¢ tax increase as the Board continuing the planning and foresight they had in the past to move them ahead so they don't get further behind. He reminded the Board that there are safeguards in place for some of the individuals who cannot pay some of the increased rates.

Dale Hamilton, who lives on Falling Branch Road, said he just moved here about two years ago and the recent reassessment resulted in a 54% increase in his real estate assessment. He met with the Board of Equalization but the meeting did not result in a lower assessment. Mr. Hamilton explained that Falling Branch is an unpaved road, it has no water lines, it has no fire hydrants

which caused an increase in his insurance rates, and it has no street lights. One of the reasons for his increased assessment was because he had to subdivide his property and sell a portion of it so it is now considered to be two home sites. And to put a 6¢ increase on the tax rate on top of his huge assessment increase makes him feel less welcome in the area. He asked the Board to consider reapplying some of the money to improvements for Falling Branch Road.

There being no further speakers, the public hearing was closed. The Chair thanked all the citizens who came to address the board in regard to the budget and the advertised tax rate. The Board of Supervisors heard their concerns, their complaints, and compliments, and they will assess every comment while working on the budget. The Chair announced a budget work session had been scheduled for Monday, April 16, 2007 at 7:30 p.m.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

On a motion by Mary W. Biggs, seconded by Doug Marrs and carried unanimously, the Board adjourned to Monday, April 16, 2007 at 7:30 p.m.

The vote on the foregoing motion was as follows:

<u>AYE</u>	<u>NAY</u>
Mary W. Biggs	None
Doug Marrs	
John A. Muffo	
Annette S. Perkins	
James D. Politis	
Gary D. Creed	
Steve L. Spradlin	

The meeting adjourned at 8:22 p.m.

APPROVED:_____	ATTEST:_____
Steve L. Spradlin	B. Clayton Goodman, III
Chair	County Administrator